

# CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>The Heidelberg Catechism</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>	<b>36</b>		Gary L.W. Johnson
<b>Text:</b>	<b>II Thessalonians 1:6-10; Matthew 25:31-33</b>		
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## Christ the Judge

### 19. Lord's Day

**Question 52.** What comfort is it to thee that “Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead”?

**Answer:** That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head I look for the very same person, who before offered himself for my sake, to the tribunal of God, and had removed all curse from me, to come as judge from heaven: (a) who shall cast all his and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, (b) but shall translate me with all his chosen ones to himself, into heavenly joys and glory. (c)

(a) Luke 21:28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. Rom. 8:23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Philip. 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Tit. 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; 1 Thess. 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (b) 2 Thess. 1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 2 Thess. 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Thess. 1:9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 2 Thess. 1:10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. Matt. 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: Matt. 25:42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: Matt. 25:43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. (c) Matt. 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 2 Thess. 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

“The idea of divine judgment,” writes Paul Helm, “is integral to the gospel. Take it away and what Christ did is essentially changed; in fact, what he did not longer makes sense.”<sup>1</sup> You would think that professing evangelicals would be united in affirming this important truth. Think again. A growing number of people who proudly claim the label “Evangelical” have completely jettisoned the whole concept of diving judgment (and have re-defined the gospel in the process).<sup>2</sup> The gospel (good news)

proclaims salvation by Jesus Christ. What is salvation? It is rich in meaning and significance. It means a lot of things that imply blessing and joy. One of these is *deliverance*. Salvation does imply escape from danger. It does denote release or redemption. From what? Judgment. None of us relish being judged, and since we have an aversion to the thought of judgment, we tend to give it little or no thought - or worse yet, to dismiss the concept of divine judgment as a medieval concept that we need not concern ourselves with in our more enlightened age. Think again. The Scriptures speak loud and clear on this subject (and very frequently).<sup>3</sup> Judgment is said to be supremely the work of God (Matthew 18:35; II Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 11:6; James 4:12; I Peter 1:17, 2:23; Revelation 20:11, 12). This work is accomplished by Jesus Christ who has been appointed to this task (John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42, 17:31; Romans 14:9). We are told that Christ will summon all before His judgment seat and judge them in strict justice according to their works (Matthew 25:32; Romans 14:9-13; II Corinthians 5:10; II Timothy 4:1, 8; I Peter 4:5; Revelation 19:11-21). This work is accomplished by Jesus Christ who has been appointed to this task (John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42, 17:31; Romans 14:9). We are told that Christ will summon all before His judgment seat and judge them in strict justice according to their works (Matthew 25:32; Romans 14:9-13; II Corinthians 5:10; II Timothy 4:1, 8; I Peter 4:5; Revelation 19:11-21). These works are the expression and product of the heart and extend even to the very words (Matthew 12:36) and secret purposes of the heart (Romans 2:16; I Corinthians 4:5). Everything will be revealed (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18; 10:26; Ephesians 5:11-14; I Timothy 5:24, 25). The norm for this judgment will be the entire Word of God in both the Law and the Gospel (Romans 2:12; Matthew 25:32; Acts 17:31; Revelation 20:12).

### **I. THE APPEARANCE OF THE JUDGE**

The contrast between Christ's first and second coming is stated in terms of "weakness" and "power." His first appearance was, in the words of William Bates: "to be the mediator between the righteous God and sinful man, by patiently suffering the most afflictive evils; to propitiate the incensed justice of heaven against us; to restore us by humility who fell by pride; to illustrate his signal love to us, to recommend by the efficacy of his example, the meek suffering all the transient evils of the world: but the second will be to perform the last act of his regal office, to determine the eternal states of angels and men, and suitably in the glory of his Diety. The divine oracles were never less obscure than in describing the first and second coming of the Messiah; the eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness, and his future glory: and the most clear accomplishment of them in his humiliation, is a convincing visible argument they shall be fulfilled in his exaltation."<sup>4</sup>

### **II. THE MANNER OF HIS APPEARANCE**

His personal appearance will be *glorious*. He will be attended with *holy angels*, and He will sit upon a visible throne of glory. The glory is the glory of His Father (Matthew 16:27).

### **III. THE PURPOSE OF HIS APPEARANCE**

He will bring salvation (Hebrews 9:28) and execute judgment (Matthew 16:27; II Timothy 4:1). This day of God's judgment is described as majestic (II Thessalonians 1:9; Jude 14). "It is clear," says Leon Morris, "that the Judge is understood as a regal personage, and One whose appearance is awful beyond description, as dispensing final justice with a royal hand. This great day is everywhere assumed throughout the New Testament. There are preliminary judgments of God throughout history. But at the end there will be the climax, that which proceeds out of the preliminary and partial judgments, and which perfectly fulfills all that they foreshadow."<sup>5</sup>

CONCLUSION: The Bible declares that those outside of Christ (in unbelief) are the *enemies* of Christ (Romans 5:10; 11:28; Philippians 3:18; Colossians 1:21; Hebrews 10:13). In Psalm 2 we read of the Son's anger and wrath and in Revelation 6:16 we read of "the wrath of the Lamb." Some people have a difficult time reconciling this startling image with that of the sweet and lovely Jesus they have grown so accustomed to hearing about. Jesus did come to seek and to save sinners (those deserving wrath). He came in the form of a servant and in humiliation to accomplish redemption (Philippians 2:5-11). Listen

to John Calvin: “He appeared thus, then, to be made obedient in our name, as was necessary to satisfy for our sins. But now He will come to be Judge. He has been judged and condemned so that we might be delivered before the judgment seat of God, and that we might be absolved of all our sins. It will no longer be a matter of coming in such humility. He will come then with the Angels of His glory. That is what St. Paul meant by saying that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will be dreadful.”<sup>6</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Helm, *The Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> This attitude was blatantly demonstrated by one of the leading spokesmen for “New-model” Evangelicals. Robert Brow in his article “Evangelical Megashift: Why You May Not Have Heard About Wrath, Sin and Hell Recently,” *Christianity Today* (Feb. 19, 1990), pp. 12-14. He concludes by saying that “no one would deny that it is easier to relate to a God perceived as kindly and loving.” In other words, since the concept of divine judgment is unpleasant, we need to adjust our view of God and make Him more likeable. Despite the fact that distinctively Christian terms are used to describe this kinder, gentler, user-friendly gospel, it is not the true Gospel. Many years ago C.H. Spurgeon warned the church about such false claims. “It is mere cant to cry, ‘We are evangelical; we are all evangelical,’ and yet decline to say what evangelical means... You may believe anything, everything, or nothing and yet be enrolled in the ‘Evangelical’ army – *so they say*. Cf. John MacArthur, Jr., *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* (Crossway, 1993), p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> Noted New Testament scholar, Joachim Jeremias, wrote: “The message of Jesus is not only the proclamation of salvation, but also the announcement of judgment, a cry of warning, and a call to repentance in view of the terrible urgency of the crisis. The number of parables in this category is nothing less than awe-inspiring.” *The Parables of Jesus* (Macmillan, 1972), p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> *The Complete Works of William Bates IV* (rpt. Sprinkle, 1990), p. 395.

<sup>5</sup> Leon Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment* (Eerdmans, 1960), p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Sermons on the Saving Work of Christ* (Baker, 1950), p. 298.